



Kids Ministry
VOLUNTEER
handbook.

Northside Christian Church



HELLO THERE!

First off, thank you! Thank you for wanting to be a part of the kids ministry at Northside! What you are a part of is extremely valuable and important. Between the ages of 4 and 14 people are more open to learning about what it means to follow Christ than at any other stage of their life. Investing in children during this extremely moldable season can have a profound effect on the course of their life. Thank you for desiring to give of your time, energy and love as you pour into the next generation.

As volunteers in kids ministry, we have the awesome privilege to reflect God's love to kids, to pray for them, and to speak His truths to them. Kids need people in their lives who will show up to hang out with them, love them and show them what it looks like to follow Jesus.

We are also passionate about coming alongside parents to equip them and encourage them to raise their children up in the Lord.

Whatever your role is in our ministry this year, this Volunteer Handbook will show you some of the ways you can begin making a lasting impact in the lives and faith of our kids.

Thanks for being willing to serve. Thanks for caring about kids and families. And thanks for letting God use you. We are honored to partner with you in ministry to impact the lives of kids and parents!

-The Northside Kids Ministry Leadership

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THE BASICS

OUR MISSION

Our mission here in the kids ministry reflects the heart and mission of Northside as a whole. One of our deepest desires is to see everyone come to experience the full and free life God has for them. In John 10:10, Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” We have found that people who are becoming fully alive and free are growing in their relationship with these three key areas:

- **Christ**
- **The Church**
- **The Community** around them

Our primary goal as volunteers in the kids ministry is to see the kids **take a step toward experiencing the full and free life Jesus has to offer**. Now let’s flesh out what exactly this means.

TAKING A STEP

We say “take a step” for a reason. It’s because there’s no finish line or certificate of completion when it comes to spiritual growth or living completely full and free. Instead, it’s a journey (a life-long journey) and no two journeys are identical. That’s why our primary goal doesn’t have anything to do with a specific skill or achievement. Instead, we win anytime we see a kid take a single step closer to living fully alive and fully free in Jesus.

LIVING FULL AND FREE

What, exactly, does it look like for a child to take a step toward living full and free in Jesus? To answer this question, we will take a closer look at the “three C’s” mentioned above.

1. **GROW IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST:** As kids take steps toward living full and free, they will grow in their personal spiritual habits such as reading the bible on their own, prayer, and connecting with God through worship, fasting or giving.
2. **GROW IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH:** Engaging in healthy Christ centered relationships with others can, and should, be a spiritual habit we help our kids develop. It is important for them to be plugged into the local church, surrounding themselves with others who can provide encouragement and support in their walk with the Lord (Hebrews 10:25). This is also a place to use their spiritual gifts for the growth of those around them.
3. **GROW IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY AROUND THEM:** Jesus never intended for us to only spend time with other believers, in fact, he has charged us to “go into the world and preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15). God desires all people to come to know him and loves to use us to show them His love. It is very important that we develop in our kids a heart for the community around them-- to help meet their physical and emotional needs (James 2:14-16), but to ultimately share the truth of God’s word with them— the hope we have in Jesus.

We count it as a win whenever a child takes a step toward living the full and free life in Jesus by practicing one or all of these three C’s.

DISCIPLING CHILDREN

The last thing that Jesus said to His followers while he was on earth was, “Go and make disciples.” Duplicate yourselves. Go and make more of you. Take your faith and pass it on to someone else. **When we talk about helping kids begin to own their faith, we’re really just talking about discipleship.** So what is discipleship? Here are three thoughts . . .

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT LEARNING

Rather than only asking, “What can we teach a kid about God?” we ask, “How can we help a kid live out their faith?” It’s not just about teaching them about Jesus — it’s about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That’s why relationships are such a key part of our ministry. Because discipleship isn’t taught in a classroom — it’s modeled in everyday life.

DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

In the Gospels, it’s not often that we see Jesus doing one-on-one discipleship. That’s because discipleship happens best in a community of people. This is why we value kids spending time in small groups, why we emphasize the role of parents and families, and why we surround kids with adults and teens who are following Jesus. We believe discipleship takes all of us!

DISCIPLESHIP IS A PROCESS

The process of discipleship is never really finished because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process. Discipleship takes time. We want to put people in the lives of kids who are in it for the long-haul. As we continue to invest in kids over time, we hope to see them take their own steps toward owning their faith.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

As a volunteer, you are making a huge impact in the lives of the kids in our ministry. Parents make an even bigger impact in the lives of their kids. (Going forward, whenever we use the term parent we are also referring to legal guardians.)

Before we explain any more about what our ministry is all about, we want to share about the importance of the parents in the discipleship process of their children. We believe that, in every child's life, the influence of a family is always greater than the influence of a church.



Jim Burns, author of *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry*, says it this way: “Long after students stop attending youth groups, they are still connected to their families.”

No matter what, a kid's family (not their church) will always be the biggest influence in their lives. As volunteers we hope to partner with, encourage and equip parents, who are the most influential people in a kid's life.

That's why our ministry is committed to serving, supporting, partnering with, and engaging the parents of the kids in our ministry. As a volunteer, caring for kids isn't your only responsibility. Engaging with parents is part of your role, too.

RELATIONSHIPS AND ATMOSPHERE

There are two other areas of focus that we want to highlight. Relationships and atmosphere. Taking the time to build relationships with the kids is so important as well as helping them build relationships with each other. It is also our desire to make sure the kids walk into a welcoming, safe and loving atmosphere.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH KIDS

Without a relationship, it's almost impossible to influence a child's faith in a significant way. That's why it's so important for volunteers to build strong relationships with the kids they lead. You can't make a child own their faith, but you can build a relationship with that child that allows you to love them and influence their faith.

So a volunteer wins when they choose to love and embrace the kids God has entrusted to them. They win when a kid sees their leader not as just an authority figure they have to obey, but someone they trust and want to follow.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

As important as a kid's relationship with their leader is, it's not the only relationship that matters. Volunteers also win when they help kids build relationships with each other because discipleship happens best in community. A small group leader isn't the only person a kid needs to influence their faith. They need each other, too!

ATMOSPHERE:

WELCOMED, SAFE AND LOVED

If you want a child to love coming to church (and you want their parents to love bringing them) then it is important for our volunteers to be extremely welcoming and friendly. We have the opportunity to begin breaking down walls as the kids feel seen, cared for and comfortable.

Children feel the safest when they are connected to familiar trusted adults. For this reason, we want to have volunteers help out as consistently as possible. When the kids feel safe, welcomed and loved they are more open to connect with others and to connect with God.

ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

ADULT VOLUNTEERS: Age 18 and up

YOUTH HELPERS: Grades 9th - 12th

JUNIOR HELPERS: Grades 6th - 8th

Our youth and junior helpers serve as assistants to our adult leaders. They are expected to engage with kids, be involved with activities, and act as role models for the kids they lead.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Love Jesus
- Love kids
- Stick to our Code of Conduct (shown at the end of this handbook)
- Commit to serve with a specific group of kids for one year
- Pass a background check (not applicable to minors)

EXPECTATIONS

- Show up when you are scheduled
- If you are unable to work when you are scheduled, please do your best to find a sub from the list of background checked individuals
- Once you've found a sub, please clear it with the kids ministry director
- In the event of you not being able to find a sub, please also contact the director
- Wear your name tag
- Look over the curriculum ahead of time
- Engage with parents during drop off and pick up times
- Build relationships with kids in your group
- Attend the adult worship service on a regular basis when not volunteering
- Attend all events, meetings and trainings for volunteers when at all possible
- Read, follow and enforce all policies and procedures

THE FINE PRINT

SAFETY GUIDELINES

FOLLOW THE TWO ADULT RULE

We require two workers for each classroom. One must be an adult age 18 or older and have undergone a background check, the other may be a responsible youth helper.

However, one volunteer may escort two or more 1st -5th graders to the restroom, remaining outside the restroom at all times, while a second worker remains for a short time with the class. Junior helpers are not allowed to take children to the restroom or be left alone with a child. A junior helper must always be paired with two adults, or one adult and one youth helper.

As much as is possible we will try to stay within the recommended adult to child ratios. For infants, it is 1 adult to every 4 children. For preschool and elementary, it is 1 adult to every 10 children.

DIAPER CHANGING AND PRESCHOOL RESTROOM TRIP

Only female volunteers over the age of 18 may change diapers in the nursery, and another adult or youth helper must be present while the diaper change occurs.

The preschoolers will go to the restroom as an entire class with both volunteers, using the walking rope. They will stop by the toddler classroom, taking any potty trained kids with them. Make sure to headcount when leaving the cafeteria and again when leaving the bathroom. A single volunteer is not permitted to take preschoolers to the restroom. Please verbally check both the mens and womens restrooms, making sure they are empty, before allowing the children to enter.

In the event of a child needing assistance, the second volunteer should be nearby and aware of the situation. Only female volunteers are permitted to assist children in the restroom and should keep the stall door open at all times while assisting.

If there is a toddler who is still in diapers and needs a diaper change, the parent needs to be contacted using the phone number on the child's name tag or on the check-in clipboard. The parent will then come get their child from the toddler room and take them to the nursery to change them, and then bring them back to class.

DOCUMENT ALL INCIDENTS

If a child in your care is injured or falls ill, or an incident occurs, an incident report must be filled out and signed by you, the director, and the child's parent. Incident report forms can be found in the red clipboards in each classroom. Please notify the kids ministry director of the incident as well.

PRACTICE APPROPRIATE TOUCH

Showing affection is a natural part of ministry and working with kids. Here are some guidelines for showing appropriate affection to kids while maintaining integrity.

HUGS: Hugs should be brief and should be side-hugs when at all possible. Kids should always initiate any hugs — not adults.

HANDS: High fives, handshakes, and fist bumps are always appropriate. Hand holding is acceptable only for kids in kindergarten or below.

HOLDING: A child 1st grade or above should not be held unless the child is being transported for emergency purposes. If a child wants to sit on your lap on the floor, gently move the child to a sitting position beside you.

AVOID AND REPORT ALL INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

The following forms of affection are inappropriate in our kids ministry in any circumstance:

- Kisses
- Kids 1st grade or above sitting on your lap
- Touching genitals
- Tickling
- Any form of unwanted affection

REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Our church policy is to report any signs or suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

Contact a staff member immediately if you suspect a child is the victim of abuse or neglect. Do not attempt to gather information from the child or speak with the parents about your concerns. Do not talk with other team members about your concerns.

DEFINING ABUSE

Sexual abuse is any occurrence in which an adult engages in sexual activity with a minor. It could be contact behavior (touching) or non-contact behavior (pictures, spying, exposure, or conversation).

Physical abuse is any contact intended to cause physical pain or injury to a child. The law does permit parents to use corporal punishment, but the discipline must be reasonable.

Neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or supervision. Neglect can also include exposure to harmful substances or situations.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Watch for possible signs of abuse which may include: Depression, sudden changes in behavior, paranoia, fear of their caregivers or others, aggressive behavior, anxiety, bed wetting or accidents in their underwear, imitating or talking about sexual behaviors, wounds or pain, unexplained bruises, or untreated illnesses. Contact your kids ministry director immediately if any of these signs are observed.

BE AWARE OF ALLERGIES

Although we do not usually provide snacks in any of our classes, parents should let the child's leader know if their child has any sort of medical need or allergy. We cannot administer any medications.

KNOW WHEN TO TEXT PARENTS

If you need to get ahold of a parent at any point during the service, you may text the parent number on the child's name tag. It can also be found on the check-in sheet. If the parent is not responding, or if you need help contacting the parent, please use the classroom walkie talkie to radio into the service. If there continues to be an issue please contact the kids director for help.

Parents can be texted if children exhibit symptoms of illness, are crying inconsolably for more than 10 minutes, or if a child behaves in a violent manner.

HANDLING EMERGENCIES

We have emergency evacuation routes drawn out on a map in the red clipboards in each classroom. These routes will be regularly discussed at volunteer meetings. In the event of an emergency evacuation, nursery through 5th grade will exit the cafeteria doors toward the playground. It is imperative that the red clipboards are taken with you when you leave the class.

We will congregate in the back field behind the school, staying in our class groups, making sure every child that is checked-in is accounted for. If the cafeteria exit is blocked, we would use an alternative exit but still meet in the back field.

IMPORTANT: Kids will **not** be released to parents until everyone is outside, accounted for, and the parents have the pick-up sticker or ID to match first and last names.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline should always be done in a positive, patient and grace-filled way that focuses on helping the kids instead of enforcing punishments. When discipline is necessary to keep a safe and effective environment for everyone, here are three steps to take:

REDIRECT

- Get on the child's level and look them in the eye
- Give a verbal warning, explaining why the behavior is not acceptable
- Give a suggestion for the right way to act or behave and help them do it

REMOVE

- If the child does not follow directions when you give them a redirection, it may be necessary to remove them from the situation or activity so they can calm down and prepare to rejoin the service
- Place them in an area away from the other kids for no more than one minute per year of age

REFER

- If the child is still not obeying, the parents may be contacted

Never attempt to physically discipline a child, belittle a child, or administer corporal punishment.

To limit the amount of discipline needed, here are some tips:

1. PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME

Become familiar with the curriculum and gather supplies before kids enter the room. When they arrive, be prepared to greet and engage them.

2. ESTABLISH RULES AND EXPECTATIONS EARLY

Communicate the rules and expectations consistently at the beginning of every class. Remind the kids often.

3. BE PROACTIVE

Follow proper ratios and make sure there are enough adults to maintain order in the room. Encourage kids who have trouble listening to be leaders and look for ways to include them in the service.

4. TALK TO PARENTS

If you have to take disciplinary action with a child, let your kids ministry director know after class. If you feel it would be best for you to talk to the parent directly, always do so in an encouraging, gentle and positive way. Ask the parents how you can help their child and support what the parents are already doing.

If a child exhibits violence to the teacher or other kids, parents will be contacted immediately, and the children's ministry leader will talk with the parents.

CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP POLICIES

Kids are under the care and supervision of their parents until they are checked into their classroom. Below are steps a parent must take when dropping off or picking up their child:

- Using our check-in system, parents must print a name tag for each child and place it on them in a visible spot. Parents will also get a claim sticker with a code that matches their child's name tag code.
- Parents must show their sticker with a matching code to the volunteer in order to pick up their child.
- A child's older sibling must be 6th grader or higher AND have the pick up tag in order to check out their sibling.
- If a child has a special need, medical issue or allergy, parents should alert the child's teacher at drop off

IF PARENTS LOSE THEIR STICKERS

Do not release a child to a parent unless they have a matching sticker, even if it's a parent you know. This will communicate to everyone that we take safety seriously. If a parent loses their sticker, they can show their ID to match their name to the parent name on the child's tag.

CODE OF CONDUCT

*****ALL VOLUNTEERS*****

As a ministry team, there are a few things we'd like everyone to abide by:

WORK HARD: You are so important to our ministry! We need you! So please, show up on time, give it your all, and be faithful with the responsibilities entrusted to you.

"Do your best... Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ." (Colossians 3:23)

BE KIND: Ministry is all about people, so to be effective in ministry, you'll need to reflect God's heart for people. With kids, parents, other volunteers and our staff, treat people with gentleness, forgiveness, patience, kindness and love.

"Get along amongst yourselves... And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out." (1 Thessalonians 5:13-15)

BE LIKE JESUS: While we don't expect anyone to be perfect, we do expect every kids' ministry leader to be striving to make wise decisions, to glorify God with their lives and to strive to look more like Jesus every day - especially in key areas like their treatment of others, social media presence (which should reflect the values of Northside), drug or alcohol use and sexual behavior.

THANK YOU!!